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# OUR DUTY AND OUR INTEREST IN THE WAR

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ISSUED BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE FOR NATIONAL PATRIOTIC ORGANIZATIONS

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PRICE TWOPENCE



# Our duty and our interest in the war.

The British Empire is engaged in war with one of the most powerful military States that the world has ever known. The struggle is far more serious than any other in which we have been involved during the last hundred years. It is, therefore, our duty and our interest to consider carefully why we are at war, what we hope to gain from victory, and what we have to fear from defeat. If we understand this, we shall then perceive why we cannot be satisfied with any half-and-half success, but must fight out the war, now we have been driven into it against our will, to the bitter end.

#### NATIONAL HONOUR.

1. First and foremost, then, we are fighting for our national honour. Some seventy-five years ago, when Belgium became a separate State, we solemnly guaranteed her independence and neutrality. About thirty years later, after a dispute which nearly involved France and Prussia in war, we likewise guaranteed the independence and neutrality of Luxemburg. Great Britain, and the other great Powers which joined in these treaties, did so because they were just in themselves, and in order to avoid a European war then and in the future. Prussia, which now guides and dominates Germany, was a partner with ourselves in the guarantee. False to her pledge, she has violated the independence and neutrality of Belgium and Luxemburg, for no better reason than that she thus gained a military advantage over France.

Now, if treaties are thus to be broken with impunity, if the most solemn international agreements can be thrown aside the moment they prove irksome to a

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great military Power, what becomes of all international morality? Treaties are the means of ending wars, or are the peaceable solution of questions likely to cause a war. If they can be broken as soon as it suits a partner to break them, of what value are they? If national obligations are to be counted as naught, we are reduced at once to a perpetual state of war, or an almost equally disastrous risk of war. The maintenance of treaties is essential to the peace of the world; and the State which wantonly breaks them is guilty of a crime against The "Concert of Europe," the Court of Arbitration at the Hague, and all similar contrivances for maintaining peace, vanish like dreams if international pledges are not to be observed. Nor does the effect of such conduct as that of Germany stop there. If international morality is regarded as of no account, a heavy blow is dealt at commercial and private morality as well. The reign of Law, the greatest mark of civilisation, is maimed in all its parts. We should not tolerate, because we cannot afford to tolerate, such conduct between man and man. Why should we condone it between nation and nation?

Various efforts have been made to excuse the conduct of Germany with regard to Belgium. It is said that, if the German armies had been allowed to march through Belgium, they would have done her no harm. Germany offered to promise that, in that case, Belgium should receive back her territory and her independence at the end of the war, with compensation for temporary inconvenience and loss. But what security was there that such a restoration would take place? What trust could be placed in the promises of a nation which, in the very act of invading Belgium, flagrantly broke its word? The same plea of "necessity" which was held to justify that breach of faith, would have excused any subsequent repudiation of promises made.

Further, Germany excuses her action by declaring

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that she only violated Belgium's neutrality because France intended to do so, and had made arrangements with Belgium for this purpose. Where is the proof of this? No proof whatever has been offered. The thing is, indeed, absurd. Why should Belgium have given France the advantages which she refused to Germany, thus exposing herself to all the horrors of a German invasion, which in that case would have been justified? The real reason of Germany's action is that bluntly stated by the German Chancellor in Parliament, when he said that he was quite aware that it was wrong, but that necessity knew no law. There was no necessity for Germany to declare war, and, therefore, no necessity for her to break her word. If we had acquiesced in the crime we should have become partners in the guilt, and could never have dared to raise our voice in defence of honour and justice again.

#### SMALL STATES.

2. In the second place, we are fighting the cause of a small State, and of small States in general. The treaty guaranteeing the independence of Belgium binds us to defend a small, peaceable and industrious people, now attacked, without the smallest provocation, by a great Power. What would be the speedy fate of the other small nations of Europe-Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, &c .- if Belgian independence were destroyed? The rest, so far as they could be brought within the German orbit, would inevitably be treated in the same way. Their independence would not be worth an hour's purchase. The Pan-Germans—an active and powerful party which clamours for the expansion of Germany by the absorption of all nations in any way akin to the Germans in race or language—would receive immense encouragement and impetus from a German victory in this war. This party has for years past demanded the

annexation of Holland, Denmark, the Flemish provinces of Belgium, the German-speaking portion of Switzerland, the semi-German provinces of Russia, and the German parts of Austria. They look forward to the creation of a vast Germanic Empire, stretching from the North Sea to Poland, and from the Baltic to the Adriatic; and if they succeed now, they will undoubtedly carry out their plan. All the gallant struggles of these small States in the past, all the noble efforts for liberty and independence which have done them so much honour, and made them the flourishing communities which they are, would be rendered of no avail. They would be swallowed up as roach are swallowed by a pike in a pond. And were we to stand by and see these things happen? It would have been rank cowardice on our part, as well as an indelible stain on our national honour, had we, for the sake of our own peace and comfort, for purely selfish and material ends, stood aloof on this occasion, and permitted the German attack on Belgium to go unopposed.

And here a word or two may well be said about Servia. Many people seem to suppose that we went to war for her sake. Now it is true that the origin of this European War is to be traced to the quarrel between Austria and Servia. The correspondence published in the Parliamentary White Paper shows how this came about. But, though the quarrel originated in the Austro-Servian dispute, it is quite clear from the White Paper that this was merely the pretext which Germany used in order to bring about the war which she desired. Into that question it is not necessary to enter further, but it should be observed that here also we have the case of a small State menaced and attacked by a great Power. Whatever we may think of the conduct of Servia in the past, the Servians showed their willingness to make all amends possible, short of sacrificing their independence. But Austria, supported and, we can hardly doubt, secretly urged on by Germany, threatened not only to punish

Servia, but to destroy her independence, with a view to gain dominion over the other small States of the Balkan Peninsula. Consequently, although we are not directly fighting the cause of Servia, and should never have thought of going to war had the quarrel been confined to the place of its origin, we are in this quarter also contributing to maintain the independence of a small State menaced with destruction by a powerful neighbour.

#### POPULAR GOVERNMENT.

3. We are fighting the cause of constitutional liberty and popular government against that of autocracy and despotism. It will be said, in answer to this, that Russia, our ally, is despotically governed. But Russia has recently made great advances towards a free and constitutional government. Some fifty years ago the Emperor of Russia emancipated the vast masses of the rural population who, till then, had been serfs, and thus prepared the way for giving the people a share in the Government. His murder put back the cause of liberty for nearly a generation, but Russia now possesses a National Parliament—the Duma; and, although this body as yet enjoys but little power, the rapid advance of the commercial and industrial classes in Russia is bound eventually to lead to constitutional government. As to France, our other great ally, she is a republic, and the chief representative on the Continent of democratic government. The constitutions of Belgium and Japan closely resemble our own

On the other hand, Germany, though she possesses the elements of popular government, has made no constitutional progress for the last forty years, and scarce any since the Revolution of 1848. There is, it is true, a National German Parliament—the Reichstag—elected by universal suffrage; but it has very little power, since ministerial responsibility is unknown in the Empire;

while in Prussia, which dominates Germany, the franchise is so arranged that the masses have no voting power in comparison with the rich. It is not too much to say that, in regard to the Army, the Navy, and the whole conduct of foreign affairs, there is no check whatever on the absolute will of the Kaiser and the ministers whom he selects and dismisses at pleasure. The Kaiser is the War-Lord; the Army and Navy are his, and his alone. And, whatever the working classes may think or do, the classes who actually have power in Germany will to have it so. They support a practically despotic government with heart and soul, and have done so for the last fifty years. It is, therefore, no more than the truth to assert that England and her allies stand for popular government against despotism, and that, if Germany wins, her victory will go far to extinguish popular government throughout Europe.

#### MILITARISM.

4. We are fighting for the cause of European peace, of arbitration against war, of the organisation of the State on a pacific basis against militarism and all that it implies. Militarism is engrained in the Prussian nature. It is the basis of the Prussian system of State; it is the means by which Prussia and Germany have grown to what they are. On military force Germany relies-on military force and on the fraud and violence which it habitually employs. The attack upon Belgium is a clear proof of the way in which militarism can demoralise a nation. But the conduct of Germany towards Belgium is only one of many instances which stain the history of Prussia. We need not go back more than fifty years. When Bismarck, the "man of blood and iron," came to power, his first care was to strengthen the army. The first great step towards the making of the German Empire was taken in 1864, when Schleswig and

Holstein were torn away from Denmark by Prussia and Austria. Then came the quarrel with Austria over the spoils of war, and the conflict of 1866, in which Austria was crushed, and Prussia became the acknowledged head of Germany. Finally, in 1870, Bismarck drove France into war, overthrew her by force of arms, annexed the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, and created the new German Empire. All these triumphs were won by military force; and it was clear that German acquisitions could only be held by the sword, or by a diplomacy which had the most powerful army in Europe to back it. Thus, militarism became more than ever the dominant influence in Germany; and German security seemed to the Germans themselves to depend entirely on military force. It is true that, after the French war, Germany remained at peace for more than forty years; but the military machine, tested in three triumphant wars, was perfected in peace. Towards the end of Bismarck's life, a policy of Colonial expansion was adopted; German industry and commerce grew by leaps and bounds; and finally a great fleet was created.

The main object of this fleet is plain enough to everyone now. It was meant for the inevitable conflict with England—inevitable, because England stood in the way of German ambitions, which aimed at nothing less than the domination of the world; inevitable also, because Germany meant that conflict to come when France should be crushed and a good opportunity arose. great historian and political writer, Treitschke, wrote years ago :- "We have settled with Austria; we have settled with France; the last and hardest settlement, that with England, is yet to come." And it is now clear that for years past Germany has been preparing and working for this end. But the destruction of France, and afterwards that of England, could only be accomplished by overpowering military and naval force. And that is why Germany is primarily and fundamentally a military State.

We cannot, indeed, dare to expect that, even if Germany is beaten in the present war, militarism will immediately become extinct. That is too much to hope for. But at least this much is certain, that, with the defeat of Germany, a heavy blow will be dealt at militarism all round. A great military Power will have failed to gain its end by war. The military principle will be discredited. After such awful losses as the war will cause, a State which nourishes the unholy desire to subjugate its neighbours, will be far slower to make the attempt. On the other hand, if Germany wins, militarism will be triumphant, and its chains will be rivetted, not only on Europe, but on the world. The crushing weight of armaments, the paralysing fear of war, under which Europe has groaned for the last forty years, will become more intolerable than ever before. This, then, is our only chance of destroying a system and a principle which form the most terrible menace to civilization. If we are beaten, in this war, conscription will be inevitable, and for every pound we spend on our navy now, we shall have to spend five—that is, if we are allowed to have a fleet and army at all. If we are to avoid such a disaster, we must throw our whole weight into the scale. It was a wise old maxim of state, "If you will have peace, prepare for war." What we have now to say is, "If you will have peace, peace in your own country, peace in all the world, make war now, and make it with all your might."

#### OUR NATIONAL EXISTENCE.

5. The objects already mentioned—the national honour, the support of small States, the cause of popular government, the overthrow of militarism—are objects which would amply justify our taking part in the present war. But, apart from these, we are fighting for our national existence. And this is the greatest cause of all, to which all others must necessarily be secondary; for,

unless we continue to exist as a great, united, independent and powerful people, we shall have no chance of attaining any of the other ends. The maintenance of national existence is, after all, the first and last aim of the State, the first and last duty of every citizen. And our national existence is now at stake.

To this fact the mass of the nation does not even yet seem to be fully awake. It is hard, indeed, to realise what we are now called upon to do and to endure, for it is close upon a hundred years since we were face to face with such a task. The victorious conflict which this country waged against the first Napoleon is a long way off; it is not surprising if our people fancied they would never be called upon to wage a similar conflict again, if they do not even yet realise the fullness of their task. Yet this conflict is upon us; the enemy is at our gates. The aim of Germany is clear; it is to hold back Russia, to crush France, and then to subjugate Great Britain.

Let us make no mistake about this. The struggle will be long and desperate, for we must remember that, for the Germans too, it is a struggle for existence. A war begun from motives of ambition and self-aggrandisement has become, on their side also, one for national life. Such wars last long; and we cannot doubt that the German people will fight it out to the bitter end. Either they or we must go down-down to the depths; either they or we will have to drink the cup of degradation to the dregs. We must be on our guard against allowing a few successes, or even an apparent turn of the tide, to deceive us into thinking that the war is nearing its end. Let us not undervalue the resources in men, in money, in intelligence, which the Germans can and will employ. They are sixty millions—not counting the Austrians—of brave, capable, energetic and united people, inspired by a devotion to the State, which is hardly equalled, and certainly not surpassed, by any nation in the world. Of these resources we have already seen convincing proof;

but we are probably still far from knowing their full extent. And that, sooner than give in, they will throw all they have into the melting-pot of war, we can have no reasonable doubt.

With what aim, then, did they go to war? For if we can know this, if we know what they hoped to win and what they meant to do, we shall know what we on our side have to fear, and what we are really fighting for. And here we are left to no mere surmise. This is not the place to give the proofs in detail; it must be enough to say that the speeches of their public men, the columns of their newspapers, and a crowd of articles and pamphlets by influential authors, leave us in no manner of doubt as to their intentions. Germany has staked her all upon one great throw, with the object of establishing a supremacy which would surpass that of Napoleon in his palmiest days, of acquiring colonies which she may exploit for the benefit of her trade and occupy with her teeming population, and of crushing or disabling any Power which can place an obstacle in her path. And after Europe, America; there are no limits, except those of the planet, to German ambitions. Napoleon cherished somewhat similar hopes, and Napoleon failed because he could not crush Great Britain. Germany knows this well enough; and England was to be reserved until, by the destruction of France and the weakening of Russia, she should be able to fall upon us with her full force. By taking part in the war, we have done something to foil this plan; we may be able to foil it altogether. But, had we stood aside, there is little room for doubt that France would have been overpowered; and then, amid the contempt of Europe, unaided and alone, we should have had, sooner or later, but certainly before long, to withstand the strengthened and triumphant German Empire.

Let us suppose France crushed; what would be the results? In the first place, Belgium would remain

in German hands. At the end of the war she might indeed recover some shadow of independence, but only at the price of passing under the practical control of Germany. She would undoubtedly have to cede Antwerp, and probably a strip of territory connecting that great port with Germany. She would have to join the German Customs-Union, which would inevitably lead to the Germanisation of the whole country. Luxemburg would be completely absorbed. The Belgian Congo would, of course, be annexed, and all our African possessions put in jeopardy.

Next as to Holland. If she remained neutral throughout the war—a position which would hardly be tenable in the event of decisive German victories—she would probably be left nominally independent, but at a price very similar to that paid by Belgium. Rotterdam would pass practically into German hands. Dutch control over the mouth of the Scheldt, which leads up to Antwerp, would have to be abandoned. Dutch, as well as Belgian colonies would become practically, if not actually, German; and, as Germany is a protective country, they would be barred to British trade.

Finally, what would be the fate of France? Bismarck himself threatened, on the next opportunity, to "bleed France white"; and his followers have repeated the threat. They have said plainly that she would be crushed so that she should never rise again. She would have to pay a war indemnity—probably a permanent tribute—compared with which the milliards extorted in 1871 would be a flea-bite. Her fleet and army would be reduced to such a level as would entirely disable her from resisting any further German demands. All the French colonies worth taking would be annexed; and, before long, Spain might easily be induced or obliged to cede her share of Morocco. Then we should have a German Tangier facing Gibraltar, and a German Agadir on the Atlantic coast to threaten our communications with

Nigeria and South Africa. Finally, France would be compelled to cede her north-eastern ports, at least Dunkirk and Calais, which would be easily accessible by land through a Germanised Belgium.

Thus practically the whole coast of the North Sea. from the Elbe to the Straits of Dover, or beyond, would pass into German possession or control; and in the ports on that coast Germany would be able to collect a fleet, paid for out of the French indemnity, double or treble its present size. Then indeed we should experience the truth of Napoleon's saving, that a strong Power occupying Antwerp holds a pistol at the heart of England. How long, in such conditions, would that heart continue to beat? How long, and at what frightful expense, could we maintain a fleet capable of averting the onslaught of a nation bent on our destruction, encamped only twenty miles from our coasts, and numbering-as, with the additions made to its territory, it soon would a hundred millions of souls? These changes would, in all human probability, have come about if we had not intervened in the conflict, or if we had deferred our intervention till too late. They may still come about unless we nerve all our energies, and employ all our resources, in order to restore France and Belgium at least to the position which they held before the war.

The recent call for a million of men, made by our Government, shows that the authorities, both civil and military, are alive to the character of the struggle, and to the fact that it will last long and demand the most strenuous and persistent efforts on our part. This call, and the solemn pact entered into by the three Powers of the Entente—that they will make no separate peace—are an answer to the attempts already being secretly made by mistaken persons, and no doubt to be made openly bye and bye, to persuade the people of Great Britain that, so soon as our own safety is secured, we may and should withdraw from the struggle. Our own

safety cannot and will not be secured until Germany is beaten to her knees and our allies placed in a position of security for good and all. National honour and the instinct of self-preservation forced us to enter upon this war; the same motives compel us to fight it out to the end, that is, until not only our own immediate safety but the safety of our allies is secured. How could we in honour desert those allies to save our own skins? And would it not be the height of folly to withdraw from the conflict till, by the restoration of equilibrium and the complete overthrow of German ambitions, we are finally relieved from the haunting dread of a German assault upon our peace? A half-and-half victory is of no use to us at all; it would merely prolong the miserable state of suspense which we have so long endured; and a struggle for our existence, under conditions far less favourable than the present—for a premature withdrawal would leave us without an ally in the world-would inevitably be forced upon us.

For the moment the nation is inspired with enthusiasm for the cause; and it is not to be doubted that the Government will obtain the national support it requires. The danger is that, bye and bye, a sense of weariness and even of depression may supervene. Increased want of employment, loss of trade, financial difficulties, a hard winter, temporary reverses on sea or land—these and many other causes may encourage the "peace at any price" fanatics, the faint-hearted and the fickle, to join in the cry to "stop the war." If we listen to that cry, if we budge an inch before a peace honourable and satisfactory to ourselves and our allies is secured, our ultimate fate is irrevocably sealed.

Suppose that we do give way and adopt the selfish and cowardly policy which will be urged; suppose that, owing to our premature withdrawal, Germany is left in a position to attack us with every advantage in her favour; and suppose, finally, that we were beaten in the struggle,

what would be our fate? It is unthinkable, some of us will say, that we should be beaten. It is unthinkable, if we are only true to ourselves and our allies, but let us not delude ourselves into thinking it is impossible. "Pride goeth before a fall." History can show many instances of empires as great and powerful as ours falling to pieces, more by their own folly and short-sightedness than by the overpowering forces of their enemies. Remember also that, great as the British Empire is, it is in one respect fragile and exposed to dangers peculiarly its own. It depends entirely on the maintenance of our naval supremacy. It is all very well to talk of the kinship, the community of language and ideas, the common inheritance of noble traditions, which bind together Great Britain and her daughter-states. What would these be worth if once our material connexions with them were cut by the loss of our sea-power? What hold should we have on India and our scattered colonies and dependencies if once that power were destroyed or even seriously weakened? And yet, to maintain our naval supremacy, in the face of a Power like Germany holding the coasts of the North Sea and the Channel, would be very difficult, if not impossible.

If then, we were beaten in such a conflict, what would be the inevitable result? In the first place, it would be the end of the British Empire. It is not likely that any attempt would be made, at all events immediately, to annex the self-governing Dominions; but all connexion with the Dominions would be severed, and no form of alliance or federation would be allowed. The United States would hardly tolerate an attack upon Canada, but it will be long before Canada can stand alone; she would probably have to join the Union, in some way or other, for her own safety. Large portions of Australia would probably be annexed; and South Africa would be forced to admit large bodies of German colonists. Our island colonies, our African possessions, Hong Kong,

the Malay States, with Gibraltar and Malta, in short, all that would be worth taking would go. As even Germany could not absorb everything at once, we might be permitted to retain India, and perhaps Egypt, but with resources and prestige so diminished that their loss could only be a question of time. Ireland would probably become a separate State, but with a permanent German garrison in Cork, Dublin and Belfast, to keep her quiet and overawe England. We should have to pay an indemnity that would drain us for at least a generation. Berlin, instead of London, would become the money-market of the world. With our resources thus exhausted, our trade openings reduced, our credit gone, what would become of our industry and commerce, and of the teeming millions which now rely upon them for their subsistence? A wholesale emigration would set in, and our population would rapidly fall to the level at which it stood in the Napoleonic War.

So much for the material losses. But the spiritual and moral blow would be yet more painful to bear—the unspeakable humiliation, the poignant but unavailing regret for our glorious and progressive past, the shattering of high ideals, the loss of all chance of taking a leading part in the civilisation of the world. We should lose all that widens and ennobles national life; our history would no longer be an inspiration but a reproach; and we should be reduced to the base and pitiful condition of a "foggy little island in the North Sea." On the horrors that would accompany invasion and defeat it is unnecessary to enlarge. The sack of Louvain, the destruction of Dinant and Malines, the Antwerp bombs, the murders and the mutilations of women and children, the devastation of Belgium as a whole, are before our eyes to warn us of what war in this country would mean, and of the fate that would befall our prosperous towns, our quiet villages, our smiling country-side.

Only a national effort, the like of which we have

never before been called upon to make, will avert the fate that awaits a careless and lethargic people. A lack of foresight and of insight, the virulence of party-feeling, a stupid confidence in our capacity to "muddle through," have done too much to blind us in the past. We must cast away the scales from our eyes, and, looking facts calmly in the face, nerve ourselves for a struggle which demands all the force and all the resolution that we can summon to our aid. Let us not be diverted from our end by the specious argument that, by overthrowing the dominion of the Teuton, we but substitute the dominion of the Slav. The future is always veiled; and things will be as they will be. That we shall have other dangers to encounter bye and bye is only too likely; we can but meet dangers as they come. What we have to fear at this moment is the danger of German domination, and all that it would imply. Russia is far off; there is no danger that she will ever occupy the coasts of the North Sea and the Channel, and from their harbours menace our insular security with a gigantic fleet. If ever the day comes when another Power threatens us as Germany does now, we shall, it may be hoped, know how to face such an emergency. But one thing at a time; sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. We are fighting now against a remorseless enemy for all that we hold most dear; that is enough, and more than enough. Of two things one; either Germany falls, or we fall. And there is no doubt we can win, if we do our best.

"Come the three corners of the world in arms, And we shall shock them. Naught shall make us rue, If England to itself do rest but true."

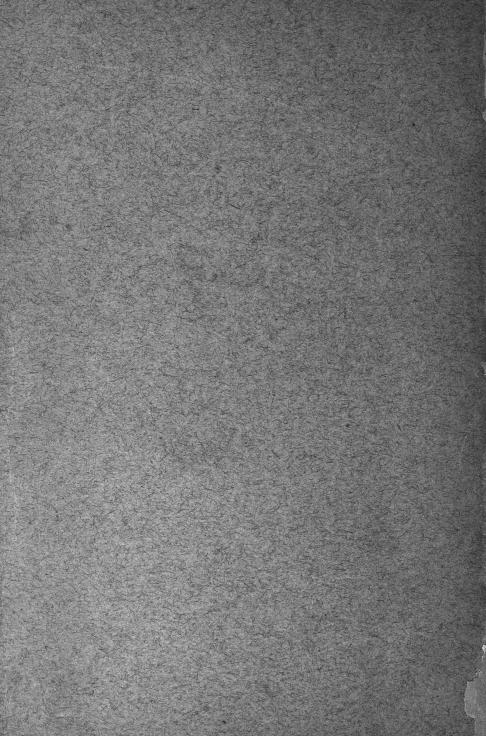
G. W. PROTHERO.

Some statements in the foregoing paper are corroborated by the following translation of part of an article by Vice-Admiral Kirchhoff, published in the "Hamburger Fremdenblatt" for September 4th.

"Let us bear in mind, first and foremost, that we have not merely to defeat our enemies in the East and West, but that we must defeat and crush absolutely the perfidious Albion, the most pernicious of all political enemies, whose policy for centuries has been full of cunning and perfidy, subdue her to such an extent that her influence all over the world will be broken for ever. To crush England is our main task; to reduce her influence would be a blessing to the culture of the whole of the world. England must not be allowed to keep the influential position which she has held up to the present. The task is not an easy one, but it is a task worth all the sacrifices it will demand ...

England must be crushed! But is this possible? Indeed it is! Never have lies, falsehood and cunning, during the years of peace, been successful; never has the world seen so clearly what the so-called fair play of Old England really amounts to as at the present moment. It is as though at last the mask has been torn from the face of the hypocrite. Nobody need be in doubt as to what the state of the world would be if barbarous Russia, vain France, and bestial Servia and Belgium, were to be victorious! But the heavy German and Austrian blows have destroyed this phantom.

German military and maritime forces are now ready in the North Sea and on the coast of the Channel to throw themselves on England and to destroy it by all means at their disposal by water, in the air, and on land, as well as by the forces of gold and economics. And Germany, whether after a short or a long struggle, is going to accomplish this, and we shall not rest until we have gained our object."





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